



# Chiang Rai

TOURIST INFORMATION

*Chiang Rai's hilltribe culture*

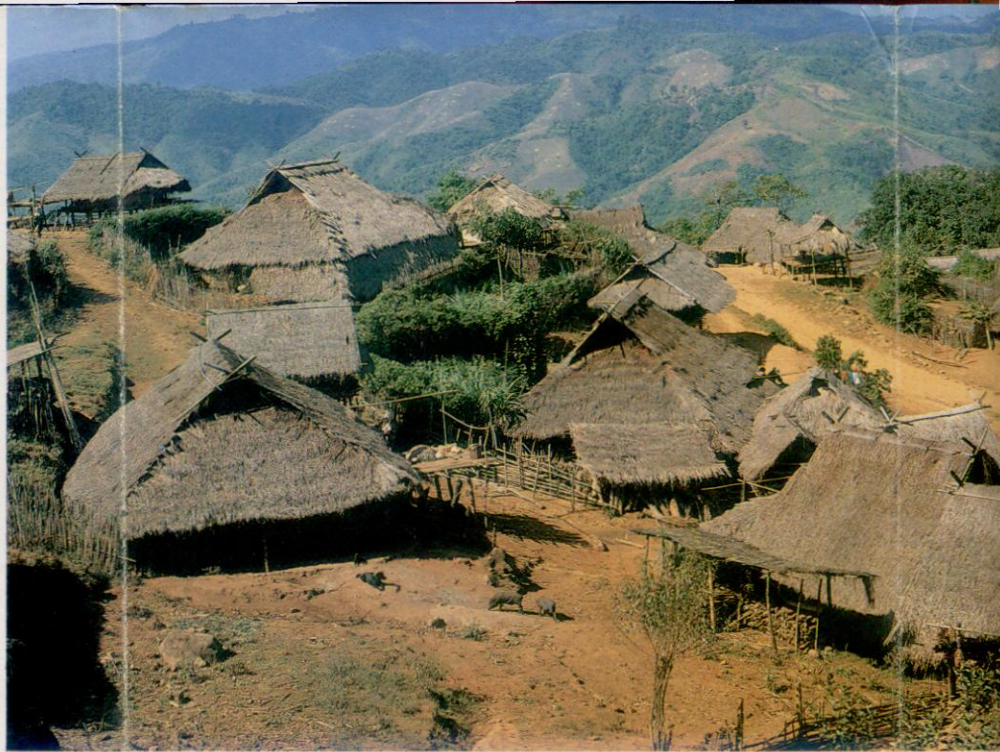
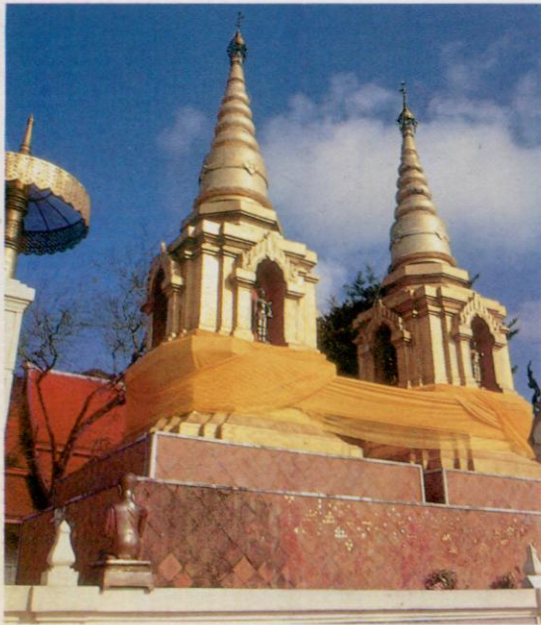


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## Introduction

**C**hiang Rai province covers some 11,678 square kilometres, is bordered by Myanmar to the north, and Laos to the north and northeast. The provincial capital is 785 kilometres north of Bangkok and is 580 metres above sea level.

Chiang Rai was founded in 1262 by King Meng Rai and was the first capital of Lanna Thai (Kingdom of a Million Ricefields). The province contains Thailand's northernmost point at Mae Sai, is well known for its crisp mountain scenery, and hilltribes, and falls within the region known as the Golden Triangle, the area where the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos converge.

## City Attractions

### King Meng Rai the Great Monument

This is located on the city outskirts, beside the northern road to Mae Chan, and honours the monarch who founded Chiang Rai in 1262.

### Ku Phra Chao Meng Rai

Situated in Wat Ngam Muang, on Ngami Muang Hillock, this stupa contains King Mengrai's ashes and relics.

### Wat Phra That Doi Chom Thong

This ancient hilltop pagoda overlooks the Mae Kok River and predates the founding of Chiang Rai as the capital of Lanna Thai.

### Wat Phra Singha

This temple, on Singhakhlai Road, is a fine example of Lanna Thai religious architecture. The Phra Buddha Singh image now housed in Chiang Mai's Wat Phra Singh was formerly enshrined here.

### Wat Phra Kaeo

Located behind Wat Phra Singha, this temple is said to have been the original place where the Emerald Buddha, now enshrined in Bangkok's Wat Phra Kaeo (Chapel of the Emerald Buddha) was enshrined.

### Haad Chiang Rai

Located 5 kilometres from the city, this scenic riverside area and promenade is a recreation area for local inhabitants.

### Mae Kok River

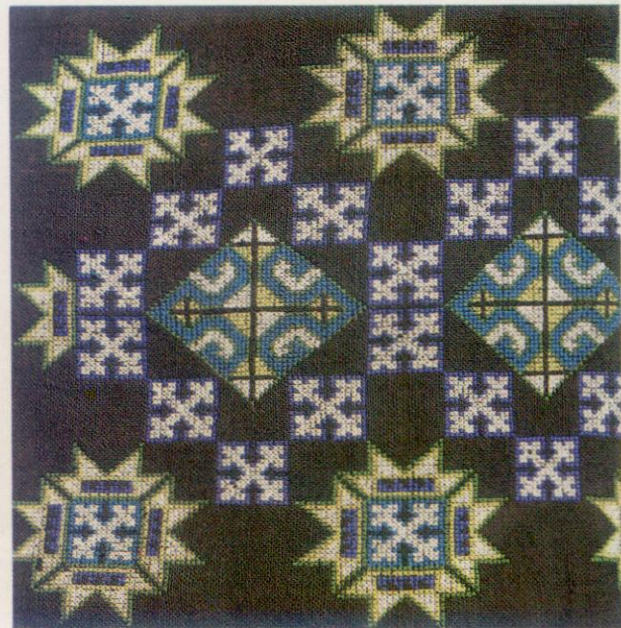
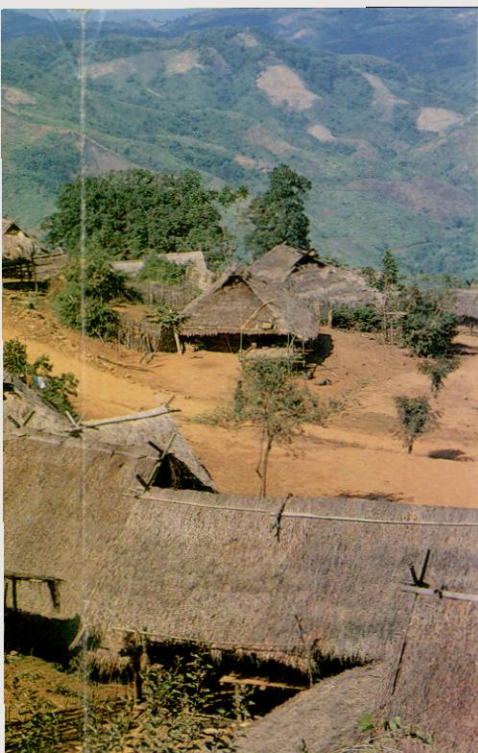
Known in Thai as *Maenam Kok*, this scenic 130-kilometre long waterway runs through the heart of Chiang Rai. The river is a major transportation artery from neighbouring Chiang Mai province, especially the town of Tha Ton (180 kilometres north of Chiang Mai provincial capital), from whence long-tailed boats make the 3-4 hour journey every day at 12.30 PM (Chiang Rai-Tha Ton: 10.30 AM). The river passes several hilltribe settlements and elephant camps from where jungle treks originate.

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### **Khun Kon Forest Park Waterfall**

Located 30 kilometres south of Chiang Rai provincial capital, along Routes 1211 & 1208, the 70-metre high Khun Kon Waterfall is the highest in the province.

## **Out-of-City Attractions**

### **AMPHOE MAE CHAN**

#### **Hot Spring**

Located 8 kilometres from Mae Chan, along Route 1089, this complex has hot mineral water and bath-house facilities. Accommodation is also available.

#### **Hilltribe Development & Welfare Centre**

15 Kilometres along the route to Doi Mae Salong, the centre aids and administers local hilltribe settlements. Hilltribe handicrafts, including woven cloth and silverware, are on sale.

#### **Doi Saen Jai**

5 kilometres beyond the Welfare Centre, this Akha hilltribe village can be reached solely by 4-wheel drive vehicles.

### **AMPHOE MAE FAH LUANG**

#### **Doi Mae Salong**

Located some 40 kilometres from Mae Chan, along Route 1089, a mountaintop settlement known as Santi Khiri is home to descendants of Chinese Nationalist soldiers who fled to, and settled in Thailand, in 1940. Mountainside

plantations of coffee, and fruit orchards, provide scenic variety. The area is particularly picturesque in December and January when Thai cherry trees are in blossom. Accommodation, restaurants and opportunities for horse-riding and trekking number among major attractions.

#### **Doi Tung**

This northernmost Thai mountain contains several scenic spots, including the Doi Tung Royal Villa, the Mae Fah Luang Botanical Garden, the mountaintop Wat Phrathat Doi Tung which affords a spectacular view of the surrounding area, and contains Buddha relics, and various hilltribe villages in natural settings.

#### **Pamee Akha Village**

This picturesque village is one of the most accessible Akha settlements in Chiang Rai province, and is located on the way to the summit of Doi Tung.

Left to Right :

*Chiang Rai's sacred twin stupas of Wat Phrathat Doi Tung, a hilltribe hamlet on Doi Tung, Akha women devoting their finest skills to embroidering, Yao diagonal cross-stitch embroidery, Akha women's headdresses and other ornamentation, and the Mae Fah Luang Botanical Garden at Doi Tung*





## **AMPHOE MAE SAI** **Mae Sai**

This border town faces Myanmar across the Mae Sai River, and is located 62 kilometres north of Chiang Rai on Highway No. 110. Numerous shopping opportunities exist for popular Thai, Burmese and Chinese goods.

### **Khun Nam - Nang Non** (Lagoon of the Sleeping Lady)

Located 12 kilometres before reaching Mae Sai Community Centre along a 2-kilometre spur road, natural rock formations resemble a reclining female to give the tree-shaded area its name.

### **Tham Pum-Tham Pla** (Water Jar & Fish Caverns)

Located 1 kilometre north of the 'Sleeping Lady Lagoon', and 1.8 kilometres from Highway No. 110, these caves are known for their spectacular interiors.

### **Tham Phayanak**

Located within a few hundred metres from the Water Jar & Fish Caverns, this cave is regarded as being especially beautiful thanks to its multi-coloured rocks.

### **Tham Pha Chom**

Located 2.5 kilometres west of Mae Sai, this cave is noted for its beautiful stalactites, and as a place of meditation.

## **AMPHOE CHIANG SAEN** **Chiang Saen**

This riverside town facing the Mekong River is 30 kilometre-

tres from Mae Chan via Highway No. 1016, predates Chiang Rai and is famous for a special style of Buddha image.

### **Chiang Saen National Museum**

This petite museum exhibits local *objets d'art*, including Chiang Saen-style Buddha images and Lanna Thai artifacts. The museum is open on Wednesdays - Sundays from 9.00 AM until 4.00 PM, except national holidays.

### **Wat Phra That Chedi Luang**

This ancient 88-metre high brick pagoda, next to the museum, is the tallest religious monument in Chiang Rai.

### **Wat Pa Sak**

Located outside the city walls, some 200 metres from the Tourist Service Centre, this deserted temple, with ornamental stucco motifs, is regarded as being one of the most beautiful examples of Lanna architecture in northern Thailand.

### **Wat Phra That Chom Kitti**

This hilltop temple has a pagoda containing a Buddha relic.

### **Wat Phra That Pha-Ngaio**

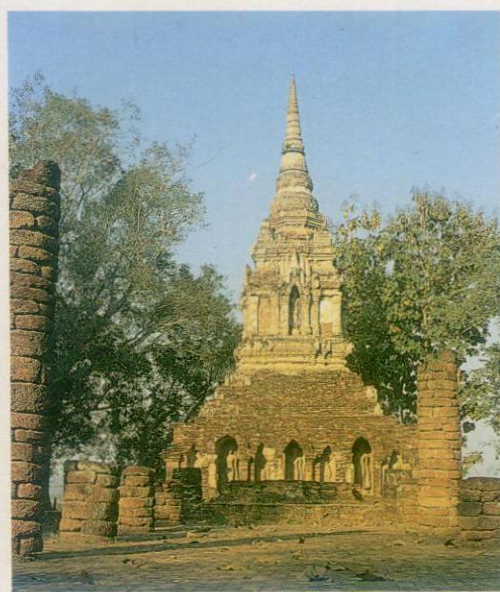
Located 4 kilometres along the Chiang Saen-Chiang Khong road, this temple's hilltop pagoda offers a spectacular view of the Mekong River and Laos.

### **Chiang Saen Lake**

South of Chiang Saen, along Highway No. 1016 (a 2-kilometre trip from the Km. 27 marker), this one square kilometre lake hosts migratory waterfowl during the winter months. Birds are seen at their best and most plentiful from November through February. Accommodation and







watersports facilities are available.

### **The Golden Triangle**

8 kilometres north of Chiang Saen, this riverside area marks the spot where the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos converge.

### **Wat Phra That Doi Pu Khao**

This riverside temple near the Sop Ruak Market, offers a spectacular view of the Golden Triangle's riverine and mountain areas.

### **Mekong River Trips**

Boats can be hired from Chiang Saen to travel upstream to the Golden Triangle, and downstream to Chiang Khong. The trip to the Golden Triangle takes some 30 minutes, the trip to Chiang Khong about 1 hour and 30 minutes depending on river currents and water levels.

### **AMPHOE CHIANG KHONG** **Chiang Khong**

Located 55 kilometres east of Chiang Saen, (and 114 kilometres northeast of Chiang Rai provincial capital), this settlement faces Laos across the Mekong River. Local tour operators can arrange for tourists to visit Laos.

### **Baan Haad Klai**

Marks the Chiang Khong area where the freshwater *pla buek* catfish, which can attain lengths of 2.5 metres and weights of 300 kilogrammes, are caught between April 18 and early June each year.

### **Baan Haad Bai**

25 kilometres along the Chiang Saen-Chiang Khong road, this Thai Lue community is best known for its hand-woven cotton.

### **AMPHOE WIANG KAEN** **Doi Pa Tang**

Some 32 kilometres from Amphoe Wiang Kaen (127 kilometres from Chiang Rai provincial capital), this scenic mountain location hosts Chinese, Hmong and Yao ethnic minorities. During January and February, the area is rendered even more picturesque thanks to cheery blossom and mountain mists.

### **AMPHOE THOENG** **Phu Chee Fah**

This mountain, 25 kilometres south of Doi Pa Tang, provides scenic views of Laos, and during February is dotted with white wild flowers known as *Dok Sieo*.

### **AMPHOE PHAN** **Doi Luang National Park**

This forested park, some 65 kilometres south of the provincial capital, covers an area of 1,170 square kilometres, and extends into areas of Chiang Mai, Lampang and Phayao provinces. A major attraction is the Phu Kaeng Waterfall.



## Major Events

### King Meng Rai Festival

January 26-February 1

This features parades, cultural performances and competitions celebrating the founder of Chiang Rai and the Lanna Thai Kingdom.

### Songkran Festival

April 16-18

Traditional Thai New Year celebrations are best seen at Chiang Saen where 4 nations (Thailand, Laos, China and Myanmar) compete in boat races on the Mekong River. Beauty contests and cultural shows are added attractions.

### Lychee Fair

3rd weekend in May

Celebrating the province's tastiest fruit, this fair features agricultural displays and exhibitions, local handicrafts, folk entertainment and beauty contests.

## How to get There

### By Bus

The 11-hour journey from Bangkok can be made on airconditioned coaches and non-airconditioned buses originating from the Northern Bus Terminal on Bangkok's Kamphaeng Phet 2 Road (Tel : 936-3660 or 937-8065 for further details).

### By Air

Thai Airways (Tel : Bangkok / Lan Luang 280-0090-110, Silom 234-3100-19, Asia Hotel 215-2020-1) operates daily flights from Bangkok and other northern Thai cities.



## Accommodation

A comprehensive list of airconditioned and non-airconditioned accommodation, and restaurants, in Chiang Rai can be obtained from the local Tourism Authority of Thailand office on Singhakhlai Road. The office is open seven days a week, throughout the year, from 8.30 AM until 4.30 PM.

Left to Right :

*Local dancers prepare to perform, a Naga is important architectural elements in temples, the Teak Forest Monastery at Chiang Saen*

Below :

*Bamboo rafting down Mae Kok river, and Chiangrai's Golden Triangle where the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos converge*

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